



**State of Wisconsin
Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Division of Food Safety**

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FACT SHEET FOR FOOD PROCESSORS

Standard Plate Count

Background

The Standard Plate Count (SPC) is used as an indicator of the level of bacteria in dairy products.

The SPC does not measure the entire bacterial population, but rather the number of bacteria that grow in the presence of oxygen (aerobically) and at medium range (mesophilic) temperatures.

The SPC is the reference method specified in the Grade A Pasteurized Milk Ordinance for the examination of raw and pasteurized milk and milk products.

Significance

The SPC can be used to evaluate the sanitary condition of a dairy product or equipment and utensils.

The procedure may be used to detect sources of contamination by testing line samples taken at successive stages of processing.

The SPC does not determine the presence of human pathogens.

A high SPC may be an indication of poor sanitation or of problems with process control or ingredients.

A low SPC, however, is not a guarantee that the sample is free of pathogens.

Prevention

Proper sanitation and post-processing procedures.

Use of high quality ingredients in food products.